or Mynnăr, spoken in the extreme north, and there may be others. A great desideratum for linguistic purposes is a more adequate method of recording sounds, and especially differences of tone, than that adopted for the standard speech, which though sufficient for practical purposes, does not accurately represent either the quantity or the quality of the vowels, and leaves something to be desired as regards the consonants (especially those only faintly sounded or suppressed). These things, no doubt, will come in time. The immense advance which has been made in education by the Khasis during the last half-century has enabled some among them to appreciate the interesting field for exploration and study which their own country and people afford; and there is reason to hope that with European guidance the work of record will progress by the agency of indigenous students.

It remains to summarize briefly the principal distinctive features of this vigorous and sturdy race, who have preserved their independence and their ancestral institutions through many centuries in the face of the attractions offered by the alien forms of culture around them.

In the first place, their social organization presents one of the most perfect examples still surviving of matriarchal institutions, carried out with a logic and thoroughness which, to those accustomed to regard the status and authority of the father as the foundation of society, are exceedingly remarkable. Not only is the mother the head and source, and only bond of union of the family: in the most primitive part of the hills, the Synteng country, she is the only owner of real property, and through her alone is inheritance transmitted. The father has no kinship with his children, who belong to their mother's clan; what he earns goes

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liquor being subject to no fiscal restrictions whatsoever. In a few States the Siems are commencing to levy registration fees, but the amounts are insignificant. Judicial fines are divided between the chief and the members of the durbar. In some States the Siems' incomes amount to a few hundreds a year only. Generally speaking, the Khasi chiefs are necessarily a very impecunious set of persons, and many of them are indebted to, comparatively speaking, large amounts. The Siem is appointed from the Siem family, there being such a family in each of the fifteen Khasi States. The most important States are Khyrim, Mylliem, Cherra, Nongstoin, and Nongkhlaw. There are a few other petty States presided over by Lyngdohs, Sirdars, or Wahadadars. A fact which is of universal application is, that heirship to the Siemship lies through the female side. The customary line of succession is uniform in all cases, except in Khyrim, save that in some instances cousins rank with brothers, or are preferred to grand-nephews, instead of being postponed to them. The difference between the rule of succession and the rule of inheritance to real property should be noted. In the former case the sons of the eldest uterine sister inherit in order of priority of birth, although it is true that this rule has sometimes been disregarded. In cases of succession to realty, however, the inheritance goes to the youngest daughter of the deceased's mother, and after her to her youngest daughter. In successions to the Siemship, in the absence of male heirs from the eldest sister the succession passes, by what has been aptly described as the "knight's move," to the male children of the next eldest sister. In Khyrim the custom of succession is peculiar, there being a High Priestess, and heirship being limited to her male relatives. Generally speaking, it would appear that succession was originally controlled by a small electoral body constituted of the heads (*lyngdohs*) of certain priestly clans, who, it is presumed, exercised their authority to reject candidates, when necessary, mainly on religious grounds. There has, however, been a distinct tendency towards the broadening of the elective basis. In the large State of Khyrim the number of the electoral body has been greatly increased by the inclusion of the representative headmen of certain dominant but non-priestly clans (*basniars*).

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Khasi religion. If the marriage has been celebrated according to the *pynkiar synjat* rite, a *kniang* (go-between) is necessary on each side, also the *kni*, or maternal uncles of the parties, to witness the divorce. In other cases the presence of the *kniang* is unnecessary, but some acquaintances and friends as well as the relatives on both sides should witness the ceremony. The husband and the wife each bring five cowries (*shài*), or, more commonly nowadays, five pice. The wife gives her five cowries or pice to her husband, who places them with his, and then returns the five cowries or coins to his wife, together with his own five. The wife then returns the ten shells or coins to the husband who throws them on the ground. A crier (*u nong pyrta shnong*) then goes round the village to proclaim the divorce, using the following words:—

"Kaw—hear, oh villagers, that U—— and K—— have become separated in the presence of the elders. Hei! thou, oh, young man, canst go and make love to Ka—— for she is now unmarried (*khynraw*), and thou, oh, spinster, canst make love to U——. Hei! there is no let or hindrance from henceforth." Among the Khasis divorce must be by mutual consent, and the ceremony must take place in the open air. Until the divorce ceremony has been performed as above described, neither husband nor wife can marry again, but after it has taken place, either can remarry, but not within the family of the divorced husband or wife. In the event of a husband or wife being absent for a long period, say ten years, without any communication having been received from either of them, a divorce ceremony is performed by the relatives on his or her behalf. It is stated by U Jeebon Roy* that the rule of monogamy is not so strict for the husband as it is for the wife, he can contract an informal alliance with another woman, the only prohibition being that she must not belong to the original wife's village. Such a wife is called *ka tynga tuh*, literally, stolen wife, in contradistinction to the legally married wife (*ka tynga tnai*). The children by the unmarried wife are called *ki khun khlur* (children from the top). By children from the top, is understood to mean children from the branches not from the root (*trai*) of the tree. Such children cannot claim ancestral property except in the wife's country.

* See page 18, "Ka Niam Khasi." (U Jeebon Roy.)

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INHERITANCE.

408 The Khasi and Synteng laws of inheritance are practically the same, although in some of the doloiships in the Jaintia Hills there are some slight differences. The Wár law of inheritance differs greatly from that of the Khasis, and the customs of the Bhois or Mikirs, who inhabit the Bhoi doloiship of the Jaintia Hills, are totally different from those of the Khasis, thereby supplying another link in the chain of evidence in support of the conclusion that the Bhois, or, more correctly speaking, the Mikirs, are of Bodo origin, and not Khasi or Mon-Anam. The Lynngams follow the Khasi law of inheritance. It will be convenient to describe the Khasi law first, and then to pass on to the special customs in vogue in the different doloiships in the Jaintia Hills, and, finally, to describe the Wár, Bhoi and Lynngam customs.

611 562 The Khasi saying is, "*long jaid na ka kynthei*" (from the woman sprang the clan). The Khasis, when reckoning descent count from the mother only; they speak of a family of brothers and sisters, who are the great grandchildren of one great grandmother, as *shi kpoh*, which, being literally translated, is one womb, i.e. the issue of one womb. The man is nobody. If he is a brother, *u kur*, a brother being taken to mean an uterine brother, or a cousin-german, he will be lost to the family or clan directly he marries. If he be a husband, he is looked upon merely as *u shong kha*, a begetter. In some of the Wár villages a newly married man is spoken of by the bride's family as, "*u khun ki briew*," some one else's son. It is, perhaps, somewhat of a paradox under the circumstances that wives should address their husbands as "*kynrad*," or lord. There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that the husband, at least in theory, is a stranger in his wife's home, and it is certain that he can take no part in the rites and ceremonies of his wife's family, and that his ashes after death can find no place within the wife's family tomb, except, in certain cases, amongst the Syntengs. Further, the ceremonial religion amongst Khasis, especially that of the home, is in the hands of the women. It is, therefore, perhaps not to be wondered at, considering the important status assigned to women by the Khasis, that women

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should inherit the property and not men. The rule amongst the Khasis is that the youngest daughter "holds" the religion, "*ka bat ka niam.*" Her house is called, "*ka iing seng,*" and it is here that the members of the family assemble to witness her performance of the family ceremonies. Hers is, therefore, the largest share of the family property, because it is she whose duty it is to perform the family ceremonies, and propitiate the family ancestors. The other daughters, however, on their mother's death are entitled, each of them, to a share of their mother's property, although the youngest daughter gets the lion's share, e.g. the family jewellery, and the family house, and the greater part of what it contains. The youngest daughter cannot dispose of the house without the unanimous consent of her sisters. If the youngest daughter dies, she is succeeded by the next youngest daughter, and so on. All the daughters are bound to repair the house of the youngest daughter free of cost. In the event of the youngest daughter changing her religion, or committing an act of *sang*, or taboo, she loses her position in the family, and is succeeded by her next youngest sister, as in the case of a death. Failing daughters, inheritance would pass by the "knight's move" to the sister's youngest daughter, who would be succeeded by her youngest daughter, and so on. Failing sister's daughters succession would revert to the mother's sisters and their female descendants. In the Jaintia Hills the inheritance of all real property passes from mother to youngest daughter. No man in the uplands of the Jaintia Hills can possess landed property, unless it is self-acquired property. In the Jaintia Hills, if a man dies and leaves acquired property, his heir will be his mother, if alive, excluding wife, sons, and daughters. If the wife, however, undertakes not to re-marry, she will inherit half of her husband's property, which at her death will descend to her youngest daughter by him.

Amongst Khasis all property which has been acquired by a man before marriage is considered to belong to his mother; indeed it may be said to belong to the man's *kur*, or clan, such property being called by Khasis, "*ka mai iing kur*" (the earnings of the house of the clan). After marriage, if there are children, the case is different, provided that the property

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421 has been acquired by the man after marriage. Here the wife
428 and children would inherit the acquired property, the youngest daughter obtaining the largest share of such property on the death of the wife. If there were no daughter, the acquired property would be equally divided amongst the sons.

[127] The following examples of the Synteng law of inheritance
428 are taken from the exhaustive diaries recorded by the late Mr. Heath, who was for some years Sub-Divisional Officer of Jowai. In the Nongkli doloiship ancestral land passes from mother to her youngest daughter; again, if a youngest daughter who has so acquired dies, the next youngest in point of age succeeds. Should such direct female succession fail, the family tree has to be looked up for the nearest branch, in which the youngest female, or her youngest female descendant, succeeds. Thus, respecting ancestral land, the youngest daughter, or youngest female descendant of youngest female heir, is virtually heir to entailed property. If a woman dies leaving acquired property, her youngest daughter or youngest granddaughter of that youngest daughter succeeds to all. In default, next youngest daughter, and so on. In default of daughters, the youngest son inherits. A man can hardly, in any circumstances, possess ancestral land; his property must almost necessarily be self-acquired. If a man dies leaving acquired property, his heir will be his mother, if alive, excluding wife, sons, and daughters. If the wife undertakes, however, not to marry again, she will get half, which will descend to her youngest daughter by her deceased husband. The mother, who thus gets the whole or half of her son's property, leaves it to her youngest daughter, or youngest daughter of that daughter, and so on, as described above in the case of a woman leaving ancestral or acquired property. If there is no mother, the man's youngest sister stands next heir with the same right as her mother. If there is no mother or sister, then the sister's female descendants stand in the man's mother's place. If there are none of these, then the man's youngest daughter succeeds to all. Ancestral property
[425] cannot be alienated without the consent of all the heirs in the entail. A gift of self-acquired property to any amount can be made by a donor during his lifetime. Acquired property cannot, however, be left by will out of the course sanctioned by

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custom. In the Amwi doloiship a widow who consents to pay the costs of her husband's funeral, provided she agrees not to re-marry, inherits half of her husband's acquired property. 428 [589]

In the War country the children inherit both ancestral and acquired property in equal shares, both males and females, with the exception that the youngest daughter is given something in addition to her share, although not such a large share of the property as amongst the Khasis. Amongst the Mikir-Bhois, i.e. the Mikirs who inhabit the Bhoi doloiship of the Jaintia Hills, the law of inheritance is totally different from that of the Khasis, for males succeed to all property, whether ancestral or acquired. Thus, if a man dies, leaving son, mother, wife, and daughters, the son takes all. If there are several sons, they divide. If there are no sons, the property goes to the nearest male heir. If a woman dies, leaving husband and children, the husband takes all. If the husband is dead, and there are sons and daughters, the former inherit. The great difference in the custom of inheritance between Khasis and Bhois is, as I have already pointed out, part of the evidence that these people are of different origin.

The Lyngam law of inheritance is the same as that of the Khasis. The youngest daughter obtains the largest share of the ancestral property, the remainder being divided between the remaining daughters. The sons do not get any share. The rule is also said to apply with regard to acquired property.

### ADOPTION.

Both Khasis and Syntengs observe a custom known as *'rap iing* (an abbreviation for *ia rap iing*, literally, to help the house). This is practically adoption. If in a family the female members have died out, the male members of the family are allowed by custom to call (*khot*) a girl from some other family, to act as *ka'rap iing*, and to perform the family religious ceremonies, and therefore to inherit the family ancestral property. The female so introduced into the family then takes her place as *ka khun khadduh*, or youngest daughter, and becomes the head of the house (*ka trai iing*). The 597 428

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The adoption of a female obviates the family dying out (*iap duh*), which to the Khasi is a very serious matter, inasmuch as there will then be no one qualified to place the bones of its members within the family tomb (*ka ba thep shieng mawbah*), and to perform the requisite funeral ceremonies. Amongst the Khasis no particular ceremonies are performed at the time of adoption; but some of the Syntengs observe a religious ceremony which consists largely of a feast to the clans-folk, at which liquor, rice, dried fish, and ginger are partaken of. Before the feast commences, each clansman is provided with a small gourd (*u klong*) filled with liquor, a little of the latter is then thrown on the ground from the gourd, and the following words are uttered:—

"Oh, God! oh, Lord! oh, ruling king Biskurom, now the *pynrap iing* ceremony is about to be performed, let the ceremony be propitious, and let males and females (of the clan) increase in numbers, so that the clan may become great, and respected, and that intelligent male members may spring up." No such ceremony is, however, observed, it is understood, in the Nartiang and Raliang doloiships.

In the case of a family being *iap duh* (extinct), the family property, according to Khasi custom, passes to the Siem. Therefore it is to the interest of the members of families to adopt a female, when such necessity arises. As there is no religious ceremony which is compulsory to the Khasis on the occasion of an adoption, perhaps we are almost justified in concluding that in former times the adoption custom did not exist, more especially as the Khasis possess a special word, *iap duh*, for describing a family the females of which have all died out; and it is admittedly the custom for the Siem to succeed to the property of such a family. The Synteng custom of *'rap iing* may have been borrowed from the Hindus, when the Rajas of Jaintia became converts to that religion.

### TENURE OF LAND AND LAWS REGARDING LAND.

Land in the Khasi Hills proper, i.e. land in the high plateau, is held somewhat differently from land in the Jaintia Hills and

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423 Thang khiew clan, and many others. It has been explained,
614 in a previous paragraph, how the clan grew out of the family. The clan lands originally, when population was sparse, were owned by families, but as the members of the family increased and a clan was formed, the lands became the property of the clan instead of the family. Such clan lands are properly demarcated by stone boundary marks. The manager of the clan lands is the *kni* (maternal uncle of the youngest daughter of the main family, or branch of the clan), whose house "*ka iing khadduh*," or last house, is the place for performing all the religious ceremonies of the clan, and is also called *ka iing seng*. All the members of the clan are, however, entitled
425 to share in the produce of any of the clan lands they may cultivate. No clan lands can be alienated without the consent of a durbar of the whole clan.

423 *Iĭ kynti* are private lands which have been either acquired
428 by a man or woman individually, or, in the case of a woman, inherited from her mother; such lands must be entirely distinguished from the lands of the clan. In portions of the Jaintia Hills, if a man purchases a piece of land, at his death it passes to his mother, to the exclusion of his children; but in the Khasi Hills nowadays a man may leave such lands, provided they were acquired after marriage, either formally by will, or informally, to his children for their support. In land customs as well as other customs the Syntengs seem to preserve more closely than the Khasis what are probably the ancient usages of the race. It must be clearly understood, however, that all land acquired by inheritance must follow the Khasi law of entail, by which property descends from the mother to the youngest daughter, and again from the latter to her youngest daughter. Ancestral landed property must therefore be always owned by women. The male members of the family may cultivate such lands, but they must carry all the produce to the house of their mother, who will divide it amongst the members of the family. Daughters, other than youngest daughters, are entitled to maintenance from the produce of such family lands.

423 In the Jaintia Hills lands are classified as follows:—

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The above and other similar sacrifices to the gods of the State or divisions of the State may be said to be the communal religious duties of the *lyngdohs*. The duties of *lyngdohs* with reference to private persons may now be mentioned. When it is found that any two people have made an incestuous marriage, that is to say a marriage within the exogamous group of the *kur*, or clan, the parties at fault are taken before the *lyngdoh* by their clansmen, who request him to sacrifice in order to ward off the injurious effects of the *sang*, or taboo, of such a connection from the kinsfolk. On this occasion a pig is sacrificed to *u'lei lyngdoh* and a goat to *ka lei long raj*. The parties at fault are then outcasted. As mentioned in another place, the sin of incest admits of no expiation for the offenders themselves. In the Khyrim State, it is said by the *lyngdohs* themselves, although not by the Siem or the myntries, that they are the reversionary legatees of all the persons who die without leaving female heirs (*iap duh*). In other Siem-ships such property passes to the Siem. The *lyngdoh* of Nongkrem can also take possession of the property of persons who have been found to harbour an evil spirit (*jingbih*) in their houses. It appears that in such cases the house and furniture are burnt, as in the case of the *Taroh* superstition in the Jaintia Hills, the *lyngdoh*, however, taking possession of jewellery or anything else of value. The only practical service the *lyngdoh* renders in return is to build the afflicted person a new house; unless, indeed, we take into account the casting forth of the devil by the *lyngdoh*. Mr. Jenkins, of Shangpung, in the Jaintia Hills, writes: "Such is the belief of the people in the evil spirits, that they are completely under the influence of the priests and spend large sums of money in order to secure their favour. They live in constant dread lest by the least transgression or omission they should offend these avaricious men and so bring upon themselves the wrath of the demons." The influence of the *lyngdohs* over the people in the Jaintia Hills seems to be stronger than in the Khasi Hills. For instance, it came to my notice in Raliang that crops cannot be cut until the *lyngdoh* has seen them, in other words, until the *lyngdoh* has claimed and obtained his share of the produce. In many places, however, in the Khasi Hills the *lyngdoh* is much discredited, owing, no doubt, to the advance of Christianity & education.

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If any stream has to be crossed, a rough bridge is made of branches and grass. This trail of leaves and the bridges are intended to guide the spirit of the deceased to the cairn. The person who carries the bones is not allowed to turn round, or to the right, or to the left, but must proceed straight to the cairn. On reaching it, a *nongknia*, or sacrificer, washes the bones three times and then places them in an earthen pot, tying up the mouth with a white cloth. Then, having taken three pieces of the hard yolk of an egg, three loaves of bread, the leg of the fowl, "*u'iar krad lynti*," and the lower jaw-bones of the animals which have been sacrificed, he places them inside the cairn and shuts the door. Eatables and betel-nut are then placed on the top of the cairn. Early next morning the relatives and friends go to the cairn with fresh food and water, and look about for new foot-prints, the idea being that from these foot-prints they can foretell future events. This they do until the third night after the cremation. During these three nights the front door of the house formerly occupied by the deceased is never closed, it being thought that the spirit may wish to return and visit its earthly abode. The whole family is moreover *sang*, or taboo, during this period, and no manner of work can be done. When the three nights are over, it is called the *lait ia*, i.e. the days (of mourning) are passed, and three eggs are broken to ascertain what was the cause of the death. After this the family goes to bathe, and the clothes and mats in the house are washed. When this has been done, the taboo is removed and the family can go to work. After a month a pig or a fowl is sacrificed, the ceremony being called "*ai bam lait bnai*." It will be observed that *three* seems to be the lucky number throughout these funeral ceremonies. The number seems to bear a similar significance in other matters of Khasi ritual, e.g. the pouring out of libations, which is always done three times.

It is *sang* or taboo for a Khasi widow to re-marry within one year from the death of her husband, there is a similar prohibition for a husband re-marrying; but such *sang* can be got over by the payment of a fine to the clan of the deceased. After the expiration of one year the fine is reduced in amount. Khasi widows do not as a rule re-marry, according to U Jeebon Roy,

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unless they have no female children, in which case the clan urges them to re-marry, so that the chain of inheritance may not be broken, inheritance amongst the Khasis always passing in the female line.

### CUSTOMS IN CONNECTION WITH DEATHS BY VIOLENCE OR ACCIDENT.

These customs are interesting enough to deserve a separate description; they are as follows:—

If a man dies by the sword, before his body can be burnt, a sacrifice of a black hen must be offered to *Ka Tyrut*, the goddess of death. The bones are then placed in a stone cairn. Again they are removed, and, after eggs have been broken, are taken to a river bank and there washed. If there is no river at hand, a tank is dug for the purpose, which is called *umkoi*. There are various such *umkois* in different parts of the district, e.g. near Raliang and Nartiang. A sacrifice of a goat is offered to the god *U Syngkai Bamon*, and a sow to *Ka Ramshandi*, both of whom are evil deities. Another sow is sacrificed to *Ka Tyrut*. After this the bones are placed in another newly-built cairn. The ceremony of placing the bones in one and then removing them to another cairn is usually performed three times; but unless the auspices, as deduced from the eggs, are favourable, the relatives must go on sacrificing and removing the bones until they are so. These ceremonies having been completed, they erect a flat table-stone, or *mawkynthei*, for the ghost of the departed to sit upon, and return home, where they propitiate their ancestors with offerings of food. In the case of the murdered victims of the *thlen* superstition the same ceremonies are observed. For people who have died by drowning, or been killed by wild animals, and for women who have died in child-birth, similar pujas are offered, except that a sacrifice to *U Syngkai Bamon* does not take place. In the case of one who has died at a distance from his home, e.g. in a foreign country, whose body has not been burnt in accordance with custom, and whose bones have not been collected, the members of his clan, or his children, take three or five seeds or cowries (*sbai*) to a place where three roads meet. Here they summon the spirit of the departed in a loud voice,

782 The Khasi also erect little platforms with little houses from long bamboo sticks in which food is served to the spirits of the woods and fields (to serve /siang-/ actually means spread out, as one spreads out a carpet or as one spreads out leaves for serving rice on).

[789] But not only through making sacrifices do the Khasi try to propitiate the devils and thereby make them harmless. They even try it with violence. Thus, as mentioned above, they drive the cholera demoness out of the house with sticks. Also during a cremation they shoot three arrows to ward off evil spirits.

There are many ways of warding off evil spirits; or, for acquiring their help words, wishes, or curses are used, as, for example, during a match of arrow shooting, the watchers who stand by the target try to keep the arrows of the opponents from hitting the target by calling on some god (ksuid) and the more they shriek, the sooner they believe they will attain their purpose. They wish to influence the arrows of the opponents.

## 3. Taboos (sang)

784 782 The sang or taboos of the Khasi also belong to superstition. Sang means the same as "sacrilegiously or most strictly forbidden." This sang can be traced back to totemistic views. Sang can be something for a single person, for a house (iing) or a family, for a sib and a whole race (jaid). If a man or a woman whose spouse has [587 428] died remarries, the sang is transferred to the relatives of the deceased man or woman. This "inheritance" of the sang is different according to the sib. By accepting the sang the inheritors must pay 11 of a /417/ kaŵ or 7 1/2 of a kaŵ or 5 1/2 of a kaŵ. By kaŵ the number 1280 is actually understood. But it means, however, that

782 But those who use nine parts take in addition to those parts mentioned above two parts of the large intestine and of the small intestine and two parts of the appendix.

It is very hard to describe the sacrificial customs of the Khasi, i.e., to describe them quite exactly, as it is made differently in many cases. And even in the same case, for example for the same sickness or the same trouble, the sacrifices are made differently. One can readily see that in the fact that some use five parts of the sacrificed animal, some even seven parts and others again nine parts. Similar differences occur all along the line. For all cases the "piece" (dykhot) and the "sour thing" (lamjew), as well as "liquor" (iad) are sacrificed.

The method of the sacrifice depends on the relatives, that is on what the custom of the sib is. The youngest daughter is the [428] heiress of the wealth, but she is also the one who is responsible for the sacrificial rites of the sib. It is her duty to preserve the sacrificial rite which was always customary in the family (ha iing). The sacrificer (u synniang) conducts himself according to her instructions. Often many sacrificers are needed, for example at a time of plague or general trouble. Since there are now not too many sacrificers who understand the matter well, many desired sacrifices are omitted. Because of that, the Khasi believe that the rooster (u siar u shan) lives again, because of that the u longduh u longsam (evil spirit) lives again, because of that the Tyrut and the Smer live again, i.e., the evil demonic influences of these spirits become influential again through the neglect of the sacrifices.

After a while a young Khasi with such advanced views married /302/ into the family clan Umliang. Meanwhile 40 years had passed. The old father U Shai was already dead. The piece of land planted by him, as it was not actually family property, according to the special customs of the War had passed on not only to the youngest daughter but also to his son Jacob U Shai and his sisters. On their side they had helped their father in the clearing of the forest. The siblings were Catholic. The young man mentioned above brought a legal complaint against the siblings before the English government official in Jowai a few years ago: the forest made arable by Jacon U Shai and transformed into a fruit orchard had been illegally acquired and is the property of the clan of his wife; he demanded a piece of the land back for the family Umliang and for the other piece a corresponding annual rent must be paid.

In reply the siblings Shai could claim that the affair was past the legal time limit. According to tribal custom the time limit on small matters was 10 years, for greater matters 30 years. In addition the main point on their side was that the piece of land in question was khlau sang, forest of the gods, and the family Umliang could not ask anything for it. For this the Shai siblings lacked witnesses, whereas the Umliangs produced several heathen witnesses for the simple declaration of the right of possession. The case was long drawn out. It was finally decided against the Shai siblings and they were declared deprived of the property. The missionary P. Benedikt Neher now concerned himself with the affair. He brought more than 100 witnesses, all clan mothers or village elders, who were ready to swear that that piece of land was a forest of the gods as long as man could remember. The English judge, whom he informed of this, decided that this was a basis for proposing a revision and change of the judgment, but the Shai siblings had lost all their money in the previous trial to pettifogging lawyers and did not have the spirit to begin again. With oriental equanimity they accepted the loss and thus the affair remained.

/303/ The case is instructive anyway, insofar as it shows that the so-called holy forests are also found in the possession of individual family clans; how they are valued by them as long as they remain faithful to their animistic views and how they are able to make their right of possession to them valid even after years.

### 3. Customs Concerning the Right of Inheritance

When the clan mother dies, the youngest daughter always receives the inheritance among the Khasi. If for any reason the youngest daughter cannot take possession, her next youngest sister follows. If there are

428 613 no girls, only sons, the inheritance passes to the youngest daughter of the sister of the deceased clan mother. If there are no such sisters or if they have no daughters, the nearest, youngest female relative is next in line. If she has not lived in the family clan of the deceased up to now, she must first spend at least 3 months in the hut of the clan mother in order to be able to enter into her rights and duties. In such cases usually the successor to the office is taken into the hut previously by the clan mother and prepared for the later activity. It can happen that the successor is not even 13 years old and therefore is not of age and capable of marrying. In this case the mother or a sister of the deceased clan mother manages the rule and the household until the majority of the inheritress. But even as a child the latter has the honored name mother; she is called kmie or kmie san.

The great principle, which determines all conditions of inheritance, is that the sons and husbands are excluded from all family property, which is always passed on to the girls, the female world. But what if a fellow or a man creates or acquires property? The case is possible and also occurs.

428 556 /304/ As mentioned, each person must help with the work in his own family clan in order to have a claim on care from the common property. Between sowing the rice and the harvest and other possible common labors there are still many days and weeks. Instead of [464] spending these with archery, hunting or the popular shong kai, or loafing around, a young man can earn money by cutting wood for others and carrying loads for native traders or also for Europeans, since in the mountains nearly everything has to be carried on the back. He can also do work in the fields or gardens for pay for others outside his clan or carry on a small trade by buying wares at the market such as dried fish, betel nuts, pepper leaves and such, and carrying them a few days' journey away to the markets in the interior of the mountains where these items are not otherwise available and selling them there for a profit. What the man earns in this fashion is his property and is not counted as part of the clan property. An industrious man can thus gradually earn enough money to rent a rice field. Through sale of the surplus crop, he will finally have enough so that he is able to buy a rice field himself, which is also 428 his property. If such a man dies unmarried, the inheritance passes to his mother. If he is married then he can, if he wishes, found a clan property for his family who may be poor and without property. The property will then pass to the youngest daughter and be passed on then in the usual manner of inheritance. Thus everything finally

returns to the hands of the women. 428 ●

The following example may explain the customs involved here and further sift them out even though it scarcely throws a pleasant light on the dissensions which have been introduced among the Khasi people as a result of the divisions of the various Christian religions which are striving for their conversion.

In the village Kyndongtupér, a man had gradually acquired some property for himself with 15 oxen and cows, /305/ a decent hut and furnishings and 3 beautiful rice fields, large enough to sustain a family clan. After his death the youngest daughter of his sister, named Ka Pliang Shai Syndūr, was considered the valid heiress. She was still under age and her mother was already dead. As a result a sister of this mother, named Ka Pliang Shai (11)took over the management 428 797 613

11. Pan and Syndur are Khasi names; Pliang Shai is the name of the family, clan; literal meaning: shining plate.

of the inheritance and lived with the little heiress in the clan hut. There was no doubt that the latter would receive the entire property after she reached her majority. After a while, a young Catholic, U Salomon Taruh, wooed for Syndūr's hand. Thereupon the older siblings, a brother and a sister, both of whom belonged to the Methodist Church, became enraged. In spite of all the hostility, the young girl stuck to her decision, married Taruh and became Catholic. The young married couple had to flee from the clan hut because of the anger of the siblings. The latter sought to have the sister disinherited, but the other relatives involved would have nothing to do with this. They were so carried away by their anger that they did what was considered a crime even in the eyes of the heathen: they drove the cattle away secretly and sold it; likewise they cleared out the clan hut and even sold two rice fields. On complaint to the competent court, Syndūr was finally granted her right; she could take over the clan hut and the family property which was meanwhile greatly diminished. 428 797 671 613

Although the Khasi who have been converted to Christianity do not need to be bound by the laws of succession in inheritance and although this is often recognized by the heathen Khasi, there is no hindrance put in their way by the Catholic Church to following their native tribal customs in this matter. The Catholic Khasi themselves do not wish to deviate from them: /306/ a dogged attachment to ancient customs and a respect for them are in their blood. Here are a few examples.

In Nongbah the Catholic clan mother ka Johanna Sunah, wife of U Andreas Tubru, died without leaving any female descendants. It would

428 797 671 613 have been understood if the only son U Johannes Sunah, according to the ruling custom of Christians elsewhere, had claimed the considerable inheritance of rice fields, forest, and huts. A serious objection would not have been expected either from the officials or the relatives. Johannes was also spoken to about it in this fashion, but in vain. He could not conquer the inner revulsion of acting against ancient tribal customs for a temporal advantage. His simple answer was: "If I am a good Catholic, God will bless me in other ways without my going against our ancient customs." And so matters stood. The whole property went to the youngest daughter of the sister of the deceased; this branch of the family was still heathen. Through industry and economy Johannes finally acquired his own household with a goodly piece of land.

The Catholic Khasi even get rid of possessions readily which they already possess if the tribal customs demand it. It happened unfortunately several years ago that both the wife of the chief teacher of the Catholic Khasi public school in Shillong, U Thomas Byllun, as well as the wife of the cook of the mission station there, U Sebastian Shiah, were both carried away by death within a short time. Both men had acquired very nice property by their industry. According to Khasi law they had no further claims on their children who were still quite small. They belonged to the clan of their deceased wives and had to be taken by them and raised. According to Khasi law, the property that they had acquired also passed to the youngest daughter. Willingly each of them handed over the children and the interim management of the property to the relatives of the deceased wives, took the few clothes and purely personal possessions /307/ with them and sought to begin again from the beginning in the rented half of a hut. To my question, whether that had been hard for them, they answered with quiet matter-of-factness: "But that is the custom among us Khasi."

It is not necessary to emphasize especially that such respect for the tribal customs has made only a favorable impression on the Khasi who are still heathen.

Gurdon relates (12) that the clan mother loses her position in the

12. The Khasis, p. 83.

family when she changes her religion, for example at her conversion to Christianity, and that the youngest daughter takes her place. The justification for this lies in the fact that she then no longer belongs to the religion and cannot offer the customary family sacrifices.

Because of her whole position as guardian of the inherited religion and customs, it is not frequent that such a woman breaks with the ancestor cult. If this does happen, it does not necessarily mean that she loses the entire property. That depends really on the position the other members of the family take. If they are all still firm heathens, who wish to have nothing to do with Christianity, they can force the clan mother to give everything up. The high respect for her is frequently so great, however, that either the whole clan or at least a part of it decides to take the same step and change religions with the clan mother. The part that remains heathen will certainly propose a division of the family property. This is also possible in other cases. 428 613 797 671

4. Division of the Family Property.

Although it is rare, the weal and woe of a family-clan can require that a family-clan be split into two clans /Clan/ and that a division of the common property be undertaken. The basis for this is if the family /Geschlecht/ becomes too big, if the elders in the family council /308/ are no longer united and hate and revenge threaten to destroy, if a part of the clan /Clan/ tries to seize the better fields by violence and refuses to deliver the harvest for the common need, if one branch has brought the whole clan /Sippe/ dishonor and shame by false oaths, incest, revenge, treachery or some other severe crime. Only the guilty party will be excluded from the clan /Clan/ in such cases, if he remains stubborn and impenitent. But if he begs for forgiveness with his lips and participates in the expiatory sacrifice, forgiveness will not be refused him. But a certain inner tension and bad feeling often remain behind. 613 578 688

At the conversion to another religion, it often depends on how the clan mother and also the family elders are inclined towards the religion in question, and also on who is changing religions. If it is only brothers, sons, nephews, or grandsons, of the clan mother, a division is out of the question, since the men are not capable of inheriting. But if it is the youngest or next youngest daughter or even the sister of the clan mother, then a division of property can be undertaken. A clan mother after all is so attached to her child or her nearest blood relatives that she would not like to push them entirely away from herself unless she were completely set against the religion in question and angered. If that should be so in individual cases, the heiress concerned will still consider, whether it is not more advisable to wait to change her religion until the clan mother has closed her eyes and she then has free play. Then that which was mentioned at the conclusion of the previous section can occur. 797 428 425 613

8: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7



—the *Shyngkup*, or porch, being flush with the ground. The *nongpei*, or centre room, is approached by a flight of steps. There are no windows, except one, which is bored on one side to admit light and air,—this is called the *pongshai*. Both Khasis and Syntengs, like other Indo-Chinese races, are much addicted to gambling, and drinking to excess is a national vice. Christianity has, through the agency of the Welsh Calvinistic Mission, gained a very striking extension, and may be said indeed to be leavening the whole nation. Schools are numerous, and are pretty well attended by girls as well as boys. The Christians, and those who have come under the influence of Christianity, have adopted a high standard of comfort, and their houses resemble English cottages more nearly than the huts with which one is familiar in India.

*Agriculture.*—The Khasis do not use the plough; they cultivate their fields with a peculiar-shaped hoe, or *mohkhiew*. They cultivate rice in the valleys, the rice being sown broadcast and the fields irrigated often after considerable labour. They also cultivate hill rice on the uplands, which they sow broadcast. The potato, which was introduced into the Khasi Hills by Mr. David Scott about the year 1830,[1] is extensively cultivated and forms one of the principal articles of export. Job's-tears (*Coix lachryma*), several kinds of millet, Indian-corn, the *Sohphlang* (*Flemingia vestita*), are also largely cultivated. The valleys on the southern slopes of the hills have extensive orange groves, the oranges, especially those grown in the neighbourhood of Shella, being famous for their quality. The betel, vine, and areca nut are also largely grown on the southern side of the hills and in the low valleys, these plantations being irrigated by elaborate systems of aqueducts. The leaf of the bay tree (*Tatyrpad*) is collected, and is exported to the Sylhet plains. The Syntengs differ from the Khasis, in that they make use of the plough. Both Khasis and Syntengs are industrious cultivators, and they possess a certain rough and ready knowledge of the uses of manure. A more detailed description of agriculture in these hills will be given in the monograph.

[1] Khasi and Jaintia Hills Administration Report for 1875-76 by Colonel Bivar.

2. *Matriarchal customs and law of inheritance of property.*—The mother is the head of the house, and is both owner and the custodian of the family property as long as she lives. Males can own no property amongst either Khasis or Syntengs except self-acquired property. On the death of the mother, in the case of the Khasis, the family property passes to the youngest daughter. According to some authorities, however, the property would in practice be divided amongst all the surviving daughters. Failing daughters, the property passes to the youngest niece, and failing a niece, to the youngest female cousin. The same

9: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AR7 Khasi AR7



611 428 custom prevails amongst the Syntengs. Inheritance to the post of Siem (or chief) also passes through the female line, there being special customs of inheritance for each of the different chiefships.

614 3. The Khasis are divided into clans, or *kur*. These clans are strictly exogamous. Some of these clans derive their names from animals, insects, trees or fish,—*e.g.*, the *tham* clan, *tham* meaning a crab; the *shriah* clan, *shriah* meaning a monkey; the *rani* clan, so called from a fish by name *rani*; the *diengdoh* clan, *diengdoh* meaning a certain tree. There are other instances also. In each instances, the clan is said to have sprung from the animal, fish, or tree, as the case may be. There thus appears to be a trace of totemism amongst the Khasis, although now-a-days their totems are not worshipped, nor do people abstain from killing, eating, or utilising them. A man when he marries does not cease to belong to the *kur* or family of his mother, but his children belong to the *kur* of the man's wife. Frequently the husband merely visits his wife at her mother's house. It is seldom the case that a man takes his wife to his own house, certainly not until several children have been born.

562 As might be expected, owing to the influence of the marriarchate, Khasi and Synteng women enjoy a much greater share of liberty than is usually the case with the sex. Although not wishing to make any general insinuations, there can be no doubt that Khasi women enjoy considerable freedom in their sexual relations. Women do all the trading, and like their Manipuri sisters make all the bazar purchases.

769 4. *Ancestor worship.*—The Khasis propitiate *Ka Iawbei*, the first maternal ancestress of the clan, by sacrificing a pig; they also sacrifice yearly to *U Suidnia* (the departed maternal great-uncle). Also when a family is in trouble, *U Thawlang* (the departed great-grandfather) is propitiated. Ancestors are further worshipped by the erection of memorial stones. These memorial stones will be noticed separately.

944 5. *Birth customs.*—At the birth the navel of a child must not be severed by any instrument made of iron or steel, but by a sharp splinter of bamboo. The placenta is placed in a pot and is kept inside the house till the ceremony of naming the child takes place. As long as the placenta remains in the house, the latter is *eang*, or taboo, to anyone except the members of the family. On the day of the ceremony of naming the child, the father removes the placenta and buries it outside the house. Having done this, the feet of the father are washed with water before he re-enters the house. When the ceremony takes place, powdered rice is placed on a sieve (*u prah*) and a small bow and three arrows if the child is a male, and a *weit* (or *da*) and a star or (cane strap) (worn across the forehead when carrying a load by the Khasis), if the child is a female.

[p.19]

## CHAPTER II

Descent, among Khasis, is counted through the mother; residence is also matrilocal. A woman lives with her mother from her birth until some time after her marriage. After one or two children have been born her husband may build for his family a house on the village land, in the village of the wife; this house becomes her property. The ancestral house goes to the youngest daughter. In the absence of a daughter the next youngest sister's youngest daughter becomes the heiress. Rarely, a man will take his wife to his mother's village. This case will be considered later.

A man is born, in the house of the mother's mother, or if the parents have built a separate house, in the house of his mother. He continues to live there until his marriage, when he generally goes to live in the wife's mother's house, whether it is in the same village or a different village.

The mystri U Subo Rai married in the village of Mawphlang, where his mother also lived, and built the house, which is known as his house. It is, technically, the property of his wife Ka Shyrngoh and will be inherited by Ka Dhonbon, and thereafter, by Ka Elistima. The house of U Subo Rai's mother, Ka Jin has been inherited by Ka Riribon, and will go to the next generation to Ka Pyn. If the latter has no daughters, the property will go to Ka Drel and failing her heiress, to Ka Flur and then to Ka Lamih. If she has no issue, it will pass to her sister Ka Lasok and so on to Ka Lajur. If Ka Lajur has no daughters, the property will go to Ka Jem's family to her youngest daughter Ka Aibon. As she has only sons, the next heiress will be Ka Symon, and if she predeceases Ka Aibon or has no daughters, the girl Ka Riwlum will inherit next. If

428 she does not have any daughter, the property will pass to the female descendants of sisters of Ka Long, as her elder sisters Ka Loimon and Ka Laiban have left no daughters. It is therefore necessary to distinguish carefully between an elder and a younger sister, and also similarly between sisters of the mother. The *generation* of the women of the same house and extended family requires to be noted with care.

The youngest daughter and heiress is termed the Ka Khaddoh. As Cantlie remarks the "Ka Khaddoh is the custodian of the family property, not the full heir in the sense known to other systems of law, but a limited heir. She is
[429] responsible for the performance of religious ceremonies.....; she cremates her mother, and if she be Ka Khaddoh of the whole family, she puts the bones of all members in their final resting place under the stone (mawbah) of the clan. The expenses of this ceremony are considerable and for this reason she gets a larger share of property, or in some cases a piece of family property in addition and apart from her separate share. Members of the family who are unable to earn for themselves and have no children to earn for them have the right of being fed at the ing-Khaddoh" (house of the heiress).

429 The management of the property is however vested in the men of the family. The ancestral property of the family of myatri U Subu Rai's mother was under the management of U Joi, in his mother's life-time; then, on the death U Joi, the next brother U Doi became manager. After U Doi, the management came to U Subu Rai. After him, the authority will pass to U Hajon, as U Sumbarai is dead and then to U Nodrem. Any sons of Ka Pyn and other sisters will not get any precedence over U Nodrem. As the senior U Kni of the Iaughiah Kur, U Subu Rai is also the manager of the common property of the Kur.
[427] This land has been leased out to various persons and the total income is divided among the different houses of the Kur.
431 Whenever there is money to be distributed U Subu Rai calls together all the representatives of the Iaughiah houses and

R Chattopadhyay 8-4, 5 (no date) 1941 AR7 Khasi AR7



divides equally. U Subu Rai explained that each house counted as a separate unit. Thus if Ka Jem, Ka Jin and all their daughters were alive, the married daughters who lived in a separate house, namely, Ka Laimon, Ka Laibon, Ka Aimon and Ka Hoiman of Ka Jem's house, and Ka Phre of Ka Jin's line, would each get a share. But Ka Jem and her Ka Khadduh Ka Aibon who lives in the mother's house would get only one share. So would Ka Jin, Ka Eiribon and the unmarried daughters of the latter. The descendants of Ka Lung would get seven equal shares for distribution to each house, and not two shares first, divided later into shares corresponding to the number of daughters for Ka Jem's and Ka Jin's house. The manager does not get any share of the collections. Authority in the management of the ancestral property therefore passes from one male to another, in the extended family, and the Kur, in a manner which necessitates a clear distinction of seniority and juniority of brothers, among themselves and also of sisters with regard to brothers.

The case of succession is similar. Gurdon notes that the Siemship in Mylliem State passes from a man to his next brother, and "failing such brothers, by the eldest of his sisters' sons; failing such nephews by the eldest of the sons of his sisters' daughters; failing such grand nephews by the eldest of the sons of his mother's sisters" and so forth in the female line. In Nongkrem, the son or similar male relative of the High Priestess becomes by delegation a Siem. The office of the High Priestess passes from a woman to her eldest surviving daughter; and failing daughters to the eldest daughter of her eldest daughter; failing daughters of her eldest daughter, to the eldest daughter of her second daughter, and so on. This is the customary line of succession, and is stated by Gurdon to be "uniform in all cases" practically.

Neither levirate, nor sororate are practised by the Khasis. Widows are stated (G) quite often not to remarry if there are daughters. There is no question of the control of the property

13: Mukherjee E-5 (1954)1958 AR7 Khasi AR7



596 extended form more often when the children of the deceased sisters of *Ka-khadduh* reside there. This extension is on the mother's side and is affiliated through the extension of mother-child relationship.

Additional members like widower brothers or widowed sisters make the Khasi family a composite one.

In a Khasi family father, mother and her brother are very important. Father who is regard[1]as *Mynder* (stranger) or *Ushong kha* (begetter), has also the position of *Kynrad* (master) of the house (set-up by him). He is the executive head and the mother is the *dejure* owner of the household.

177 178 604 593 [428] Modern conditions and spread of Christianity have greatly affected the Khasi society and changed the Khasi ways of life but have failed to alter the traditional mode of inheritance even among the Christian Khasis. Another important fact which is apparent in the Khasi families, is the change of the status of the mother's brother (*Uknii*) in his sister's house. His influence has greatly been diminished due to clash with *Ka-Khadduh* (heiress). He has almost lost his control over his sister's [562] family. This has made the women exert their status to a danger point. Consequently, some amount of maladjustment in the relationship system, moral depravity and disintegration loom large in the family horizon.

596 613 Family is the core of Khasi social organization and the closeness of familial kin with the members of the sub-clan is due more to the fact that sub-clan owes its development to the family. A *Shi-K'poh* (member of sub-clan) is a secondary relative and can easily be approached for any help.

614 The functions of the above mentioned social groupings are as follows :

Clan (*Ka-Kur*)—It regulates marriage. It being a larger non-residential kin group contact between its members is infrequent. The amount of social participation needed on certain level to intensify the relationship among its members falls far short of. But nevertheless, there existed among the members

614 764

[1] [Should read: regarded.—Analyst]

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



178 423 614 lands is the *kni* (maternal uncle of the youngest daughter of the main family, or branch of the clan), whose house '*ka iing khadduh*,' or last house, is the place for performing all the religious ceremonies of the clan, and is also called *ka iig seng*. All the members of the clan are, however, entitled to share in the produce of any of the clan lands they may cultivate. No clan lands can be alienated without the consent of a durbar of the whole clan" (Gurdon, 1914, p. 88).

178 423 428 614 Theoretically we can assume that the land was owned by the family (precisely, *iing*, the matrilineal descent group at the lowest segmentation, the structure of which will be discussed later) who first claimed the right to the land, and was managed by the maternal uncle of the youngest daughter, the heiress entitled to the property. In course of time, with the increase of the descent members and with fissions of the descent group, this land was inherited through the youngest daughter's line, but other members who had become segments of the main descent group had a right to use the land, so long as they remained in the same area. Newcomers who belonged to another clan were not granted the same right and had to pay rent. According to the information I was able to collect, even people of the same clan could not claim the right to use the land, unless they were the direct matrilineal descendants of the women who first owned the land. In this sense, the descent group solidarity at a lower level is much stronger than that of the Garo.

Therefore, newly possessed or purchased land is always owned by the individual family (*iing*, descent group). This Khasi conception of land ownership produces a picture of predominant private ownership of land, combined with high geographical mobility of the population (see p. 112). In such circumstances, it seems that even the land called "clan land" has been alienated or sold frequently, and has developed small holdings to suit the small segments of descent groups. In particular, when the entitled owner moved away to another area, the land was sold. For instance, in Sohkynduh, the maternal uncle of Sor (mentioned above) purchased the land indicated above about ten years ago from a family of Siem Lyngngoh who left for another village. This land was originally purchased by the Siem Lyngngoh from the Dkhar to whom the land belonged as part of the clan land.

Under this system, clan ownership of land can develop only (1) when the members of the descent group remain in the same community for a considerable period and (2) when there is sufficient land to accomodate all members. I think these are the main reasons why land-holding at present among the Khasi is found to be in small descent groups—in one household as in Kongton in most cases, and this I call private ownership. For the second reason, further explanation is

178 423 428

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



necessary. The chances of acquiring a piece of land nowadays are small, except for very successful men, and usually the size of the plot is only just enough to maintain one household. When this land is passed on to the next generation, the youngest daughter will hold the title to it. This fact tends to exclude married elder sisters from the right to use the land, since it is not sufficient for more than one household. Thus the ultimogeniture succession rule seems to have developed more sharply and to have encouraged limited inheritance in conjunction with the shortage of land.

This tendency creates unbalance in the economy of the households within a community. It is a usual picture in Khasi villages, for the bigger and well-built houses to be occupied by the youngest daughter's family, while the elder sisters reside in poor huts. Youngest daughters are usually landowners, while their elder sisters have often to become day-labourers after their marriage, unless their husbands are capable men, or their fathers wealthy enough to give them some share of their acquired property. On the whole, the variations at present between rich and poor are considerable in a Khasi community, in comparison with that of the Garo, where the economic condition of each household in a village is more or less similar. These differences are not only a matter of economic organization but arise from the nature of each social structure.

The economic and social patterns of Sohkynduh and Kongton are very similar, but their dialects are slightly different: my interpreter, who came from Cherrapunje, could work quite well at Sohkynduh, but at Kongton he found some difficulty, especially with the speech of the old men, and with their religious expressions. The head man of Kongton, who was quite accustomed to the Cherra dialect, acted as an interpreter for us. Such differences in dialect in the Khasi Hills are common phenomena; it is said that every valley has its own dialect. Differences are found not only in speaking, but also, to a certain extent, in culture and in social usages.

## II. Village Endogamy

One of the outstanding features of Khasi social organization is the predominant tendency of endogamy on the level of the village, which contrasts with the structural orientation of the Garo village exogamy. This is closely connected with the distributions of clans and the nature of the descent groups.

The Khasi population consists of a number of *kur*, matrilineal clans, whose members consider themselves to be descended from a common ancestress. The members of the same *kur* have a common

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



society? Among the matrilineal Central Bantus, Richards says that the determining factor in residence at marriage is the marriage payment or the type of goods and services which the bridegroom gives (Richards, 1950, p. 249). However, the Khasi have no such custom in the marriage contract, it is therefore out of the question to explain the two types of residence in this way. In the case of the Khasi, the determining factor is the type of marriage with relation to the rule of inheritance and ownership of property, which is clearly related to the structure of the *iing*. Khasi marriages can be divided into two categories i.e., marriage with an heiress and with a non-heiress. Marriages with an heiress must be uxorilocal. This accounts for category 1 or 3 of the household pattern. On the other hand, marriages with a non-heiress become neolocal and correspond to category 4 of the household unit.

## IV. Marriage with the Heiress

A man married to an heiress, usually lives with his wife's parents and her unmarried or divorced brothers and sisters. For a man, life after marriage under such circumstances require great adjustment and endurance. The husband's status is especially weak when a male member of the wife's kin lives in the same household. The management of property and all economic activities are entirely controlled by the authority (wife's brother or maternal uncle) of the *iing*. The husband works in the wife's field under constant supervision from this authority. Both economic activities and domestic affairs are always under the management of this authority. The children have more attachment to, and are more obedient to, the maternal uncle than to the father. The tie between the uncle and the nephew is so strong that the father is rather like an additional member of the household. He is the last person to be introduced to visitors.

This family system is clearly reflected in the daily behaviour. When we visited the Khasi household of a youngest daughter, if a man (obviously the husband) came first to greet us, he always said "please wait, my wife (or mother-in-law) is coming." And it was the wife who entertained us, offering tea or pan and discussing matters with us, while her husband remained silent in the corner of the room, or in the next room. If her uncle or brother was there, *he* would be the person who talked to us, while his niece or sister served us. In such a case, we were seldom introduced to the husband. When I was working at Shella, I happened to stay in such a family. I had hardly any opportunity to talk to the husband during the two weeks of my stay. He left the house very early in the morning and came back late in the evening from the fields. While he was at home, he was

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



592 593 604 always somewhat outside the family conversation which was centred on the maternal uncle and his sisters, nephews and nieces, by whom I was well taken care of. This is somewhat similar to the situation amongst the Cewa and the Yao of the Central Bantus, which have what Richard calls 'the detachable husband' (Richards, 1950, pp. 233-35, 248), though the parallel is not by any means exact.

428 581 586 [604] [606] [592] [593] There is, therefore, inevitably an element of tension in the relations between the wife's maternal uncle (including parents-in-law) and the husband (son-in-law) and this tension makes the latter's life extremely uncomfortable. This awkward position is well shown in the divorce rate. At Kongton (see List 9), out of 61 couples (house-owners and their spouses), the number of persons who had experience of divorce was 33 (female 15, male 18) and those married more than twice numbered 19 (female 7, male 12). Out of 61 couples, there were only 31 in which neither husband nor wife had been divorced. In my census of Jatinga village, 70 per cent of all divorce cases were marriages to heiresses. In general, the period when divorce occurs more frequently is before a couple get children and after the wife has passed the child-bearing age. A marriage breaks up either through the action of the wife or of the husband, but generally through that of the wife. However, the state of separation which I presently describe is brought about by the husband, though later it results in a divorce from the wife. Divorce does not mean a great catastrophe for a Khasi wife, especially if she is an heiress and her husband's economic contribution is not significant. Moreover, in this society remarriage is as easy for a widow or divorcée, as it is to divorce. In the villages of Sohkynduh and Kongton, the couple who wants to divorce has only to throw a few Annas together in the presence of some witness, usually an elderly man.

[587]

581 593 In addition to divorce, there are many actual separations of husband and wife, of short or long duration, when the husband runs away from his wife's house to his sister's. Though it does not always end in divorce, considerable number of husbands have a strong tendency to spend most of their time at their sister's house. Khasi women often told me, "I don't know why he does not come back to my place." I have often found the husband staying at his sister's house only a few houses away from his wife's, without any particular reason. They are obliged to see each other every day whether divorced or separated. This kind of ambiguity in the marriage relation seems to have an important correlation with the Khasi social structure, combined with the village endogamy. The man and and wife have grown up together from their childhood in the same village and known each other very well. Hence their psychology cannot clearly distinguish the marriage form as a newly-established independent social relation-

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



ship. They still live in the same familiar atmosphere as before their marriage. The implications of this ambiguity in the married state are considerable. Particularly the husband's uncomfortable situation, when the wife is heiress, encourages him to take marriage less seriously.

A husband who undergoes hardship in his wife's house, finds himself as the authority in his sister's house; if he is not the authority, he can find at least a respected position as uncle or brother. In the case of a man of authority in the *iing*, the tendency for him to regard his *iing* as more important than his married life is proportionately stronger, as I will discuss later. Hence the most unstable and unsuccessful marriages are those between the heiress and the man of authority. This is one of the reasons we often find among the Khasi: a brother or an uncle, who is already married, acting nevertheless as the head to a family *(iing)* and as a member of its domestic group. This means that he is in a state of temporary separation or divorced. Among the Ashanti, a man and his wife's brother are never found as members of a common household (Fortes, 1950, p. 262), but among the Khasi, on the contrary, a man and his wife's brother are often found as members of a common household. In such cases, however, the brother has no wife, or never brings his wife to his *iing*. Therefore, a man and his wife and his sister never reside together. As far as the residence of women is concerned, the Khasi keep to the strict descent rule; two women who belong to different descent groups never live together. This point differentiates the Khasi residence pattern, in which social structure is involved, from that not only of the Ashanti but also of the Yao where the head of a descent group can bring his wife to his sister's household, though, among other members, uxorilocal marriage is the rule. These differential aspects of matrilineal systems will be discussed from a more theoretical point of view later.

In addition, should a Khasi man even succeed in spending his life with his wife's kinsmen, as soon as the wife dies, he will usually return to his *iing*, that is, to his sister's house, where he is received warmly and where he often acts as the *de facto* authorithy, as in the similar situation of divorce and separation. Thus the strong matrilineal structural principle tends to orient a man towards his own descent group, the *iing*.

The man's attachment to his *iing* is very great throughout his life. In this regard the Khasi differs from the matrilineal Negri Sembilan Malay. Among the latter, returning to the matrilineal kin is regarded by the man as an imposition rather than as the enjoyment of a legitimate privilege (see Swift, 1958, p. 157).[1] This difference

1. He presents this fact as one of the reasons of the durability of marriage among the Negri Sembilan. Indeed, on this precise point they differ from the Khasi where marriage is rather unstable.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



seems to come *firstly* from the different residential arrangement on marriage: among the Negri Sembilan a man marries into his wife's group, i.e. his wife's village; being thus separated from his kin, and as a result of the physical absence of his wife's brother or maternal uncle in his domestic family, he enjoys considerable rights in his wife's household—as Swift states, he is 'master in his own house.' On the other hand, since among the Khasi the man stays in the village where his mother's (or mother's successor's) house is, even after his marriage, his relation to his natal house is preserved; *secondly*, from the structural difference of organization of the descent group. Among the Khasi, the *iing* is always the centre of the descent group, based on unigeniture succession and inheritance. Hence, the core of the descent group is always found physically in a particular household, whereas among the Negri Sembilan, the descent group is *not* organized on a *household* level, but is a much wider organization, including apparently many households. Membership of an actual household and of a descent group are at different levels. To marry out and become a member of his wife's household means for the man the transfer of his household membership. Likewise, his sister's husband becomes a member of his sister's household. Thereby he becomes a secondary member of his sister's household after marriage though he keeps his memberhsip in the descent group to which his sister belongs. Among the Khasi, membership of a descent group always corresponds to membership of a particular household. The Khasi man can always demand his rights at his natal house primarily, as he is a member of that descent group. But it should be noted that he has this right only in his mother's (or mother's successor's) household, not his other sisters' (non-heiress') and mother's sisters' households (unless one of them is successor of his mother), though they may belong to the same descent group. These matri kin's households are considered as separate *iing* (strict functional descent group) from his.

Indeed, sometimes a man cannot find his *iing*, because his mother died leaving no daughter to succeed her, or his sister died leaving no successor, and his *iing* became extinct. Such a case occasionally happens when a man becomes a divorcé or a widower as he is getting old. Then he has to face a serious social and economic condition. In divorcing, he has to leave everything he owned, his earnings including the house which he built, and even children . . . really he has nothing left him except his body.[1] Such a wretched man collects some timber and makes a small hut for himself, though sometimes lads who sympathize with him help him to build it. Unless he finds some woman

1. A widower has an alternative solution—to remain in his late wife's household till he marries again, though his position is not comfortable there.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



whom he can marry, he has to endure this miserable lonely life, while often in the same village his former wife is living in a well-built house with her children and her matrilineal relatives as before. Households of 3, 13 and 30 of Sohkynduh in List 6, and 23, 29, 38 and 56 of Kongton in List 9 are instances of such cases. It is really a pitiful picture to see such a man, aged and poor, living all alone.

## V. Marriage with the Non-heiress

Outsiders who come to the Khasi Hills are often impressed by the Khasi husband's miserable status and express surprise at the high divorce rate. This is mostly due to exaggeration based on the marriage with the heiress. However, where a man marries a non-heiress, there are many successful marriages with paternal authority. In most of these cases a man's status as a husband and as a father is stable. First of all, the domestic residential unit is an elementary family. From the onset of the marriage the husband's labour is of great importance to his family, since a non-heiress usually has no economic background, i.e., no dowry or inherited property (see p. 105). The economic circumstances allow a man to be the *de facto* head even though whatever he earns belongs, as a rule, to his wife. A man who succeeds at the beginning of his married life is respected and honoured as father in his family for the rest of his life. By this type of marriage, the man's status is firmly established. It is therefore a more secure form of marriage than a match with an heiress.

In such a marriage the children love and obey their father. The management of his acquired property will be taken over by his son and the property will be handed over to his daughter. Thus the paternal authority is as well established in this form of domestic family, as in a patrilineal family. However, the great difference from a patrilineal case is that the husband/father status is not permanent as the authority of the family. Theoretically he exercises it in the absence of a male adult member of his wife's *iing* (actually founded by his contribution), in other words, till his son is grown up (see p. 12). In the next generation this will form an established *iing* in which the husband of his youngest daughter will suffer again.

The household of this kind of marriage with a non-heiress actually enjoys a considerable degree of independence from the descent groups of both wife and husband. If a man who has established a matrimonial life independent of his wife's natal *iing*, is not the authority of his natal *iing*, his relation with the latter usually becomes weaker. Economic and residential factors make it possible for the men to make the considerable shift from his *iing* to his wife's *iing*, and though

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7



178 no polygynists, though there were many personal temporary illicit
184 relations or love affairs.

It is true that even in interior villages polygyny is rapidly decreas-
595 ing. In the two villages I found only two cases of polygyny: a man with two wives in Sohkynduh (Josio in List 6, whose wives are 26 and 32), and a man with three wives in Kongton (Jubongrai in List 9, whose wives are 8, 20 and 52). These cases appeared clearly as cases of polygyny which the villagers recognized as such, speaking of them quite differently from the way they would have spoken of lovers, calling them wives and husbands. Of course, the first wife socially outranks the secondary wives, as *ka tynga trai*, and the term *ka tynga tuh* is used for the latter, as Gurdon states (1914, p. 80). The difference being that the first wife has a legal marriage ceremony while the
585 others have not—*ka tynga tuh* means literally 'stolen wife.' About
595 the marriage ceremony, Gurdon gives a detailed discription (*ibid.*, pp. 127-130) and says there are three forms of marriage ceremonies, *Pynhiarsynjat*, *Lamdoh* and *Iadih-hiad*. The first and second forms are considered the more respectable; the last one is resorted to by the very poor who cannot afford the greater expense entailed by the first two. Unfortunately, during my stay in these villages, no marriage ceremony took place, but villagers described to me what seems to be the *Iadih-hiad*, where only a fowl is sacrified, and the whole procedure is much simpler than that described by Gurdon. However, whatever the complexity and richness may be, there is a distinct line between having a ceremony and not having it, and this draws the distinction between the status of the first wife and that of the secondary wives.

• 428 Nevertheless, this distinction has more of a social bearing than the
595 legal bearing it has in a patrilineal system. Since they follow the
851 matrilineal system, the legal distinction between the first wife and the secondary wife does not affect their children's status and their property rights, at least not in the villages where I worked. The children's social locus is determined by their mother. The children (particularly the youngest daughter) have the right to inherit their father's acquired property which is automatically under their mother's ownership. If the polygynist father has acquired property by working their mother's field, or in trading on behalf of their mother, whether she be the first wife or the second, this property undoubtedly belongs to the children of that wife, not to the first wife alone. The father's physical locus at the time of his economic realisations is the decisive factor.

591 The Khasi polygynist, without bringing his wives into one house-
595 hold, alternates his residence among them, in turn or according to his temper. This practice is similar to that of the Trukese described by Goodenough (1951, p. 123), and quite different from that of the Garo

16: McCormack E-4,5 (1956-1958) 1964
[P. 106A] AR7 Khasi AR7

group of matrilineal and Mon-Khmer-speaking people who claim as their ancestral homeland the present-day United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District (within approximately 90° 47′ and 92° 52′ E. and 25° 5′ and 26° 5′ N.). This group includes the Jaintias (also Pnar or Synteng) in the southeast, who differ from the Khasis primarily in their duolocal residence pattern and less virulent forms of sorcery. (The Hadem in eastern Jaintia are a Kuki people.) It also includes the Lyngngams (also spelled Lynngam) in the west, who practice migratory swidden agriculture and certain peculiar funerary rites, and are said by Ehrenfels (1955) to be culturally intermediate between Khasis and Garos. Finally, it includes Bhois, Wars, and upland Khasis, which terms are primarily territorial. Bhoi country is the north-central part of the District, and is culturally complicated by the presence of Mikirs, Lalungs, and Nepalis. War country spans the entire southern length of the District, so that Wars divide into Jaintia Wars and Khasi Wars; of these, the Khasi Wars have traditionally transmitted property to sons as well as to daughters. The upland center of the District is the country of the Khasis proper, those whose culture provides the most useful model for interpreting the variations found elsewhere. [For general reference on all categories of Khasi culture, cf. Costa 1936 and 1937; also Gurdon 1907, especially for data on regional variations.] **Geography.** The District is 5,554 square miles of hilly tableland, intricately dissected by numerous rivers, and marked by significant ecological variation over very short distances. The tablelands step gently downward north from Shillong Peak, which at 6,445 feet is the highest point in the District, and over about 55 miles ease into the Brahmaputra valley where this is some 250 feet above sea level. To the south, the land slopes more steeply downward for about 20 miles, and then drops abruptly, in cliff and steep-slope formations, to the Ganges sea-level delta that begins at its north with Sylhet. The annual southwest monsoons drop torrential rains around Cherrapunji and Mawsynram villages (for Cherrapunji, a record 805 inches in 1861), but then, reaching Shillong 33 miles to the northeast, provide only about 100 inches per year. Rainfall is again greater in Bhoi, which shares the Brahmaputra valley climate. Climate is temperate on the high Shillong plateau, where it seldom freezes and never snows. To the north, climate becomes subtropical, forest is jungly, and fauna abound. The climate to the south is also subtropical. [Cf. Hooker 1891: chap. XXIX.] **Linguistic affiliation.** Khasi is one of the major Mon-Khmer languages, related to Mon, Khmer, Semang-Sakai, Nicobarese, and Palaung-Wa. The major Khasi dialects are Khasi, Jaintia, and Lyngngam, to which Grierson adds War. Further minor variations occur from village to village. The Khasis had no script until 1842, when the roman alphabet was successfully applied to the Cherrapunji dialect of Khasi proper. [Cf. Rabel 1961; Grierson 1903-28: 2; Bareh 1962.]

101 131 197 101 184 162 563 59 054 24 764 014 [428] [113] 133 [131] 132 [113] 197 [212] [113]

thereafter, the British negotiated treaties with all the Khasi states, the last treaty being signed in 1862. It was contracted that the chiefs would be subject to the authority of a resident political agent, whose duties would involve maintaining law and order, judging cases of heinous crimes, approving the popular selection of any new chief, and exercising control over certain categories of natural resources. Khasis were guaranteed noninterference in their customary way of life, and they were not then, nor are they now, taxed. Most Khasis, as opposed to Jaintias, were never an integral part of British India, but they did undergo social change as a result of British presence. To summarize Mills (n.d.): (1) The British introduced the potato, which the Khasis rapidly took up as a cash crop for marketing as far as Calcutta. The intensive specialization exhausted the soil and made for ever-poorer crops. (2) Christian missionaries made large numbers of converts, and there arose the difficult question of whether a Christian should inherit property that traditionally was earmarked for her performance of non-Christian religious rituals. (3) About 1864 the British transferred their headquarters from Cherrapunji to Shillong. When they made Shillong the capital of the entire state of Assam, non-Khasis flocked to it, land values soared, and the concept of private property became increasingly important. Khasis began to marry with members of other ethnic groups, which introduced confusion into traditional social patterns. These problems were exacerbated during World War II, when Shillong and its environs enjoyed enormous economic prosperity. One notable aftermath of this affluence has been the accelerated enrollments in schools and colleges. Hundreds of Khasis now have the B.A., M.A., and even the Ph.D. degree. • With the Independence of India in 1947, and under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India (which was drafted by a Khasi), the United Khasi–Jaintia Hills District became a Part B, or Autonomous, Tribal Area, to be governed by a District Council composed largely of Khasis and Jaintias, and responsible not to the Legislature of Assam, but to the Governor of Assam as agent of the President of India. The native-state system and the chiefs still exist, and the District Council finds it difficult to effect legislation which is neither offensive to regional custom nor a simple blueprint of ill-fitting all-India legislation. The major political schism at this time is between Jaintias, who are accustomed to centralized authority and taxation, and Khasis, who resist the notion of taxation to support the work of a central District Council. [Cf. Gait 1926; Aitchison 1931; Bhuyan 1949; Morris 1910.]

175 619 648 [726] [651] [177] 177 648 244 439 134 797 428 635 633 167 563 423 [873] 648 642 [651] [563] [113]

SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND HOUSING. **Settlement pattern.** Khasis live sedentarily in named, nucleated, and unplanned villages which are situated just below hill summits to avoid strong winds but still be defensible, and which usually include a de-

361 [312]

16: McCormack E-4,5 (1956-1958) 1964
[P. 110A] AR7 Khasi AR7

says that the MoBrCh but not the FaSiCh is prohibited (1897: 2), but Gurdon says that the MoBrCh is eligible after the death of MoBr, and that FaSiCh is eligible after the death of Fa (1907: 78). Nowadays both types of marriage occur, whether the linking relative is living or dead. **Residence.** Residence is either duolocal or matrilocal under the roof of the wife's mother until the birth of one or two children. For a man married to a youngest daughter, it then continues to be matrilocal. For men married to other daughters, it becomes uxorilocal; there have also always been cases of virilocal residence, and it is now common to find neolocal residence in Shillong. For non-Christian Jaintias, it is duolocal throughout the marriage. **Domestic unit.** The domestic unit is the elementary family, though for a youngest daughter it may temporarily include also her aged mother, aged father, unmarried siblings, or divorced or widowed brothers. **Inheritance.** Traditionally, after the Khasi mother had helped each of her daughters to build and supply a house when each one married and had children, her only real obligation to help them economically was ended. Everything she possessed, excepting certain personalty that was destroyed in her cremation, was inherited by her youngest daughter. Failing daughters, a woman's property reverted to her next youngest sister's daughter. Today, this pattern is often modified by putting more property into the hands of older daughters and even sons. [Cf. Cantlie 1934; Becker 1924.] **Divorce.** A woman may effect numerous and usually brief separations from her husband by simply closing the door of her house to him, whereupon he returns to the house of his mother or youngest sister. Divorce, however, must be initiated by mutual consent. Divorce is very common, even though women resist it because they do not wish to lose a provider, and men because they do not wish to lose their children. Formerly it was accomplished by a simple ritual in the presence of witnesses, followed by public announcement by a town crier. Now, the witnesses and the public announcement have been dispensed with, and evidence for divorce consists only in the word of the parties concerned.

835 [114] [178] 591 592 428 [178] 586 586 178

SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION. **Political organization.** The basic unit of political organization is the village, which is composed of one or more dominant local descent groups plus several others. Village government is by an assembly of all resident adult males, under the informal chairmanship of a headman elected by them from among their number. The membership of any immigrant household into a village is defined by the participation of the household's males in this assembly. Sustained membership in a village is voluntary. Khasi chiefdoms probably arose out of voluntary associations of villages, which occasionally transferred allegiance from one chief to another.

62 174 619

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7



strip of fine silk for the loins, a part of which hangs gracefully as low as the calves in front. No notice is here taken of what has undoubtedly been added and borrowed from their more civilised neighbours in the plains. 291

'MARRIAGE.—The marriageable age for females is from 15 to 18; for males, from 18 to 24. Matrimonial alliances are contracted either through the parents or the living representatives of the families to which the parties belong. The mode of procedure is still very primitive and unceremonious. The bridegroom, escorted by a number of friends and relatives, goes to the house of the bride, where all are feasted and lodged for the night; on the morrow he leads the bride, accompanied by a number of her relatives, to his own house, and entertains the company with dishes of boiled rice and fresh pork. After remaining there a day or two, the newly-married couple return together to the house of the wife, which becomes their future home. Marriage is dissoluble by regular divorce, for any sufficient cause, and often without any assignable reason except mutual dislike or want of issue, the latter being the most common case of all. Marriage with the Khásiás is simply a conventional arrangement, with nothing further for its object than the procreation of children; failing that, it is no longer looked upon as a contract permanently binding. Divorce is effected in the presence of eye-witnesses—the parents, or the heads of clans. Five cowries (*kauris*) are produced by the parties and exchanged, then cast away by mutual consent, and the ceremony is over. Parties once divorced can never again contract marriage with each other, but they are at liberty to marry into other families. Polygamy, strictly so called, is not sanctioned by Khási custom. Adultery is looked upon as a serious crime. If the five cowries have not been cast away by mutual consent, both husband and wife are held to be subject to the "matrimonial demon;" and even when either dies in wedlock, the survivor is not at liberty to contract a fresh alliance until he or she pays the family a sum of money as the means of removing the surviving party from subjection to the "matrimonial demon." The husband is a stranger, so to speak, in the family he has entered, and perpetuates the race of others, not his own. The children in all questions of lineage and personal rights follow the mother. There are always two interests in the same family—that of the husband, and that of the wife. Whatever the husband may have earned or acquired in

58 591 586 [581] 587 595 837 587 593 611 593 428

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7



593 wedlock goes to the wife and becomes her property; but all other
• 428 property is inalienable, and reverts to his family, as also does his corpse after death.

771 'RELIGION.—The religion of the Khásiás is demon-worship, or a jumble of enchantments muttered by priests who are sorcerers. They invoke evil spirits as the deputies of God and the instruments
775 of His pleasure or displeasure. The Khásiás believe in metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls. After death, human beings are transformed into monkeys, crabs, tortoises, frogs, etc. Though a future state is not denied, it is treated with absolute indifference, as beyond the sphere of responsibility; all rites, ceremonies, and observances bear reference to the welfare of mankind in this world. The spirits of their departed relatives and ancestors are invoked only in so far as they are considered to influence and have power
764 over the present life. The Khásiás burn their dead, and collect the ashes into urns, which are kept under a slab raised on four others enclosing a space. These monuments are of various kinds and sizes —one for individuals, another for a family, and another for a whole
614 clan. There is no caste system, but each clan is called after some object of nature, as the Oak clan, the Crab clan, etc., and these names entail certain restrictions beyond which intermarriage is
771 forbidden. The Khási religion may be briefly described as the practice of forms to cure diseases, and to avert misfortunes of all kinds, by means of ascertaining the name of the demon who is the author of the evil, and the kind of sacrifice necessary to appease it.

797 'CHRISTIANITY.—The Welsh Mission has been labouring amongst the Khásiás and Syntengs for thirty-two years. The Christians number about 1000 [according to the Census of 1872, the total number of native converts in the District is only 85]. There are four central stations—Cherrá, Shellá, Shillong, and Jowái —and twenty-three churches. Translations of the whole of the New Testament, and a portion of the Old, are now (1876) going to press, besides other religious books.

197 'LANGUAGE.—The definitions generally given of monosyllabic
193 languages are far from adequate to enable us to assign to the Khási tongue its position amongst the Indo-Chinese family of speech. Still, in the absence of a better terminology, it may be described as monosyllabic in the agglutinative stage. The monosyllabic element greatly predominates. By far the larger number of the compounds are mere agglutinations (in a modified

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7



sense) or juxtapositions of roots which have not thereby suffered either obscuration or absorption—that is to say, they are all, with a few exceptions, reducible to their constituent root words, which are still "current coin," and retain their power as independent vocables. The cases in which obscuration and "fusion" of roots have taken place are confined to—(1) the noun prefix *jong*, expressing abstract ideas; (2) the verbal prefixes *byn*, *kyn*, *lyn*, *ryn*, *syn*, *tyn*, *pyn*, *byr*, *kyr*, *lyr*, *pyr*, *syr*, *tyr*, expressing causation, intensification, and contrariety. The language is found purest at Cherrá Púnjí. The Khásiás have no written character or literature of any kind of their own. Tradition says that all was lost while they were yet masters of the plains, whence they were driven by a general catastrophe or deluge to their present fastnesses in the hills. The following works on the language have been published: *Khási Grammar*, *Anglo-Khási Dictionary*, *Khási Primer* (Parts I. and II., with Vocabulary),—all issued by the Calcutta School-Book Society; *Khási English Dictionary* (in preparation), and an *Anglo-Khási First Book*.

'CUSTOMS REGARDING INHERITANCE.—A Khásiá, whether married or single, if he makes his mother's house his home, is said to be earning for his *kur*, *i.e.* for his mother, or his brothers and sisters, or his mother's relatives. On his death his property goes to his mother, if living; if not, to the grandmother; if she is not living, then to his sisters; should his sisters also be dead, to his sisters' children. Should the deceased have left no sisters, the property goes to the brothers; should he have no brothers or should they be dead, the property descends to his aunts, or to their children if the aunts are not living; should the aunts have left no children, the property descends to the grandmother's or great-grandmother's sisters or children. The property of a female on her death goes to her mother, if the deceased have no children; or if the mother of the deceased is not living, the property goes to the brothers and sisters; if the sisters are dead, then their children become the heirs. If there are no such children, the property devolves as in the case of males. When a man is not living in his mother's house, but in that of his wife, he earns for his wife and children. On his death his property descends to his wife, with the exception of the ornaments and clothing worn by him during his lifetime, which go to the brothers and sisters or other relatives of the deceased. Should the deceased have been a widower, the property goes to his children, and in their absence

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7



428 to the sisters of his wife, or to her nearest relatives if there are no sisters. The rank and titles of a deceased male descend to his brother; when no brother exists, then to the male children of his mother's sisters (maternal aunts); should the maternal aunts have no male children living at the time, then to the eldest male child of his sisters. When no relatives are to be found, the property of the deceased goes to the ruler of the country; or if a man dies leaving no relative other than wife and children, *i.e.* no relatives on the mother's side, the property in this case also goes to the ruler, who, as the wife and children cannot preserve the ashes of the deceased, takes charge of them, and for so doing takes all the property also. With regard to the inhabitants of the Lower Hills at Shellá, the custom as to succession is as follows:—Property belonging to a subject of Shellá is divided into two classes—(1) Property inherited from ancestors, which descends to the nearest of kin or to the relative of a deceased person who can perform his obsequies. (2) Property acquired during the lifetime of the holder, which is inherited by the children, whose duty it is to provide for the maintenance of their mother until she re-marries or dies.'

434 465 342 352 342 184 262 434 276

MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.—The Khásis and the Syntengs are as a people prosperous. Common labourers, if adult males, can earn wages as high as one shilling per diem, and adult females as high as eightpence. The dwellings of the well-to-do classes are generally constructed of masonry, with thatched roof and plank floor, and divided into two or three rooms. The furniture consists of a bedstead (*charpái*), a seat or two (*murá*), some cooking utensils, and a few boxes. The ordinary peasants and poorer classes construct their huts of stone, mud, or plank walls, with a thatch or cane roof. These are fitted with wooden platforms or loose planks placed on the ground to serve as beds. The food of the well-to-do classes consists of rice, fish when obtainable, fowl or meat, curry, vegetables, oil, hog's lard, fermented and spirituous liquor. It may be estimated that the living expenses of an average-sized household of this class would be about Rs. 25 or £2, 10s. a month, valuing the articles of consumption at *bázár* prices. An ordinary husbandman or labourer lives on rice, dry fish, occasionally a little meat, oil, or hog's lard. *Pán* leaf, betel-nut, and lime are essential to the comfort of all the hill people, who are inveterate chewers of *pán*. They commence at an early age, and are rarely seen without a *pán* leaf in their mouths; the females are quite

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7



## III. Explanations

### 1. General

124 128 601 Most of my informants were illiterate. The spelling of the terms was checked and corrected by my English-speaking and writing Khasi- and Pnar- friends, mentioned in para one, to whom thanks are being here once more expressed. All responsibility for spelling mistakes, however, which may have slipped into this list has of course to be borne by me.

Blanks (—) or question marks (?) in one of the columns do not necessarily mean that there is no word used, by the respective group, for the particular term. They more often indicate that my informants did not use, or know, the particular term, or that I failed to enquire about it in a [114] manner sufficiently clear to my informants. This is particularly true of general terms, partly or fully corresponding to English general terms, such as parents or grand-parents, or the terms No. 9/a and b, 13, 15/a, 19-21, and 26, which were partly explained to me, by Khasi friends in Shillong, where I stayed some time after completion of field-work during the rainy season. Hence I could no more return for verification to the little accessible War-villages in the steep southern slopes. Although I am planning to utilize a future opportunity for such checking up, I am yet publishing the present results in the hope that they may thus become accessible to field-workers among other S. E.-Asiatic, and especially Austro-Asiatic speaking peoples.

193 601 128 All terms which are equal for both sexes (cf. Nos. 10, 11, 18, 19, etc.) are used with *ka* and *u* respectively. These sex-determining prepositive articles, as also the honorific *i* are specially mentioned in the list, *only if* this is essential for the understanding of the respective terms as in Nos. 3-5, 7, 8, or 10.

### 2. Special

601 Term No. 1 — to give birth or beget (*khe*) signifies also relatives on the paternal side as in *para khe* (paternal cousins No. 5/c), in contra-distinction to *para kur*, 5/b, (lit. : cousins of the clan), i. e. maternal cousins, since the clan is a matrilineal unit. This usage of the word *khe* appears also [842] significantly in the terms 15/a, 17, 19/b, 20, 22, 32 and, as an integral part of the Khasi kinship terminology, renders it highly improbable that the Khasi matrilineal system could have originated in ignorance of the biological function of the father. It is a significant feature in the matrilineal social system.

The terms 3 to 3/b refer to unmarried but biologically marriageable youths. [881] It will be noted that there are (and were in 1954) no indications of puberty-[584] rites *for either girls or boys*. There is also no child-marriage among Khasi. The use of special terms for mature, unmarried youths is therefore significant.

Term 6 — *i* an honorific article, is at the same time indicative of [428] diminution[*], which is remarkable for two reasons: (firstly) the diminution is used for the oldest and most respected family members, like the diminution

[*] Nissen Susan (1936), p. 86.

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7



of father in Russian (for the *tsar*, etc.), (personally) the youngest, not the eldest, daughter performs the family rites and inherits the family-property [28]. Even in cases where there is no woman to inherit, the youngest, not the eldest son inherits [29]. Among the conservatively matrilineal Pnar (Jaintia) this term of diminution *i*, however, carries at times a somewhat contemptuous meaning, though the minorate is strongly in force also among them. The ambivalent position of this honorific term of diminution is thus significant (compr. term 9/*e* among Pnar and infra.)

Term 7 — mother: (*i* mei) — The prefix *i* used among Khasi and War Khasi signifies particular reverence (supra: term 6). The classificatory character of the term has been discussed by CHATTOPADHYAY [30].

Term 9/*f* — *hep* for all younger siblings, cousins and even other young folk does not indicate the consideration which the terms 9/*d* — *kong* for older sisters and female cousins, or 9/*e* — *kah* for their male equivalents indicate. The term *saw* (9/*e* among Pnar) stands here, as generally, for elder and implies a honorific meaning (compr. term 6 supra and term 13/*e* infra).

Terms 10/*a* and *b* show that husband and wife address each other by equal terms and do in no way indicate anything like an *inferior* position of either wives or husbands of which I did also not find any indications otherwise. It may here be mentioned that property rights even in newly established estates, vest in women and are inherited by women, — not generally men.

Term 11/*d* — *ka khun khaddah* — the youngest daughter whose important position in Khasi religious ritual, social organization and inheritance law has already been referred to sub term 6 and described in detail elsewhere [31]. The *affectionate character* of this term finds vivid expression in the abbreviation *ka dah*, which I heard from sisters and the father of a youngest daughter.

Term 13/*e* — *mei saw* (mother's older sister). The word *saw* (older) here has a definitely honorific character, although the *mei khynnah* — the mother's younger sister (term 13/*f*) may be the heir of Ego's ancestral property. This constellation corresponds to the peculiar significance of terms 6, 9/*d* and especially 11/*d* (supra).

Terms 13, 14, 15/*a*, 16, 16/*a*, 19/*b*, and the terms for cousins 10, 20, 21/*a*, 21/*b*, 22 show, like term 7 — mother (supra), classificatory character. The restriction on cross-cousin marriage is of different nature, according as to whether they belong to different households, or not, as has been discussed by CHATTOPADHYAY [32].

Term 16/*a* — *dia* (mother's brother's wife) is basically the same as term 15 — *dia kha* (father's sister) [33] though the latter is qualified by the additional term *kha*: (begetting, birth) which signifies paternal relationship (see: term No. 1).

[28] GURDON (1914), pp. 83, seq.; CARYLON (1930), p. 11.
[29] CARYLON (1930), p. 22.
[30] CHATTOPADHYAY (1944), pp. 33, seq.
[31] GURDON (1914), pp. 83, seq. and CARYLON (1930), pp. 11, seq.
[32] CHATTOPADHYAY (1944), pp. 36, seq.
[33] In detail discussed by CHATTOPADHYAY (1944), p. 37.